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ABSTRACT

The ways the administrative staff of the Carleton (Ontario) Catholic School Board has tried to promote change in the teaching of reading have encouraged more than half the teachers to use individualized reading programs. By using workshops, large and small interactions with a consultant, and individual consultations, the entire teaching staff has been reached. Extra funds and as much direct contact between supervisory staff and teaching staff as possible also support the change to individualized reading programs. Teacher input is actively sought in both formal and informal meetings. Teaching staff interactions are encouraged through the establishment of a teacher center which stocks equipment and resources and is operated by the teachers themselves. The direction of change toward individualization in the reading program was set by the administrative staff, and teachers are encouraged but not forced to follow the lead. Within the Carleton schools, this method of staff development and change utilization is working. (TO)

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INDIVIDUALIZATION AND THE OPEN CLASSROOM

BY

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The topic this morning is The Process of Change: Individualization and the Open Classroom.

The first thing I should do is give you some definitions to acquaint you with my own biases so that you will have a better idea of what I mean when I attempt to communicate with you this morning. First, I'd like to give you my definition of individualization of learning in the reading programme. Then I'd like to give you the definition of Open Classroom or Open Education that I feel comfortable with. Thirdly, I would like to discuss some of the aspects of the change process which we, in my Board, have found useful to keep in mind, and after that I would like to relate these to what we have done and are doing to promote change especially in the area of reading. Last of all, I would like to show you a short slide presentation which I hope will translate into graphic terms what the change process is bringing into my system in the area of individualized reading.

If this meets with your approval, then what about the chameleon-like term "Open Education".

Whenever I think of the term open classroom, mental images rather than a definition come to mind. I start to think of a so-called educational film I once saw in which the teacher professed not really to know what his role was, in which there was a lot of disjointed activity over a long period of time, in which neither planning nor directing nor evaluating was done by the teacher, in which the teacher disavowed his role as diagnostician and leader and in which it appeared evident that the teacher and pupils seemed to like and respect each other as fellow human beings.

I could go along with this teacher's behaviour to the point that he recognized the human relations aspect of teaching was important, but I had to be in complete disagreement with the other aspects of his perception of teaching, because I believe teachers should teach and that implies doing all the things that seemed to have lost importance to him.

So my definition of open education would include all of those things which he seems to negate plus a few more, such as, (i) there being a place for excellence, (ii) a place for a teacher's holding of reasonable levels of expectation in terms of the achievement of pupils, (iii) a place where kids can react to and investigate a diversification of materials,

(iv) a place where basic skills are acquired and (v) a place to learn how to think. And it has little to do with whether you are teaching in an egg crate or a warehouse. Any definition of open education or open classroom which contains all of the above would be acceptable.

The simplest definition of individualized learning would be something like: Individualized learning is found in a situation in which the teacher's efforts are in direct response to the stimuli produced by the individual student's responses. In this situation the teacher makes an effort to continually diagnose the needs of the individual and continuously plans and acts to fill these needs. In my estimation open education and individualized learning are totally compatible as far as the role of the teacher is concerned because the teacher's role is defined in the same way for both situations. Individualized learning in reading does not mean that each child is "doing his own thing". Neither does it mean the abandonment of the concept of grouping because it is valid to group for specific needs, certain activities, sharing, etc.

Individualized reading involves listening, reading, speaking and writing and utilizes books as resources for ideas to write and talk

about. I go along with Ruth Strang when she says, "Reading is a process of helping every individual, through his own efforts, to discover and develop his reading potentialities for his self-fulfillment and social usefulness.

The conditions for effective learning in this situation would be those as set down by Ralph Tyler, briefly: (i) motivation of the learner, (ii) the provision of experience, (iii) guidance. (iv) time to practise and ample materials on which to work, (v) high level of expectations for achievement, (vi) opportunity for sequential practise and (vii) a means of the pupil judging his own performance.

It is most interesting to note that the kind of individualized learning in the reading programme that Dr. Don Carline talks about satisfies Tyler's conditions for learning. As a matter of fact, it is for this same reason that we are encouraging the teachers of our Board to embrace the individualized learning method of teaching kids how to read.

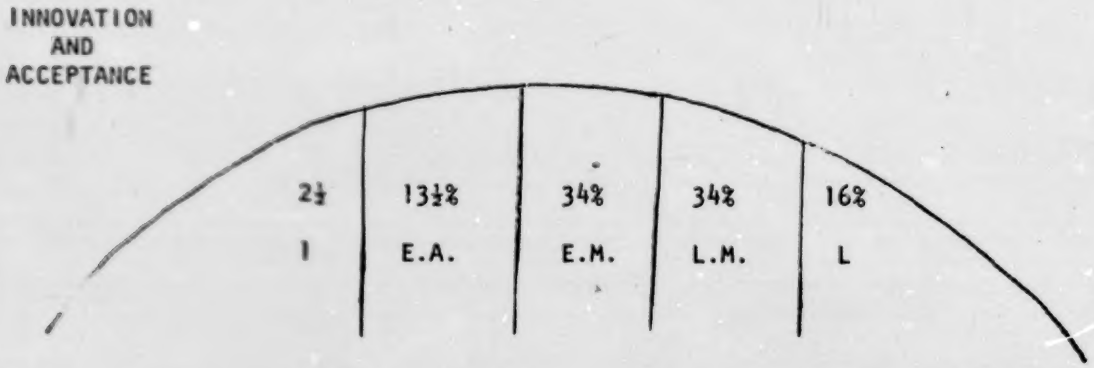
Well then, how can we define change? Miles said, "Change is very nearly an undefined primitive term". I don't have a neat and concise two-line definition and you don't really need one. What you do need is an awareness of what change in the educational context is about. Change is about people. Change needs time to take hold. Change occurs when a teacher abandons a familiar method or approach for a new and different one. Change occurs when goals or objectives are re-defined or when relationships change so that goals are achieved in a different way. Change implies a comparison between goals and achievement. And change is a stressful and difficult thing for those involved in embracing or implementing it because it can threaten a teacher's needs for safety, acceptance, esteem and self-fulfillment. On the other hand it can be exciting and offers the promise of fulfilling to a greater degree all of these needs. To control change you must know what effects it is having and, therefore, some ways of measuring it are needed.

It is one thing to recognize some of the aspects involved but there is another requirement. We should also try to understand the dynamics involv We are all aware of the fact that change takes place at different rates in the

various areas of endeavour. Consider the progress in aviation, medicine and agriculture, for example. Compared to these, education really is remarkably stable. Any why should education be slow to change? Because educational change has traditionally spread by diffusion! To understand this we need to go back to the first thing we mentioned in connection with change. Change is about people. If we are talking about the classroom, the school, the district or the entire Board of education or the State, we are talking about people and whether they are ready or able to accept change. And it depends on communication - people telling others that something is new and good and should be used. There is a diffusing of ideas from one person to another. It's a social process rather than an intellectual one and spreads wave-like in kind of a bolo-bat or hoola-hoop fashion.

Diffusion is characterized by a very slow start, rapid acceptance and then a tapering off. So initially, according to Everet Rogers, you have a very small group, the innovators, who get the idea. Then come the early adapters, who are quick to latch on to new ideas, then the early majority, who are a little less quick and less daring, followed by the late majority who wait things out and finally the laggers who are the conservative, self-satisfied reactionary people who strongly uphold the status quo. (Miles calls these people "committed nuts". They will experience role conflict because their

ideas won't fit after a while).



And we can also apply Rogers model to organizations. Some are innovators, some are laggers, etc. Having said this, the first question that comes to mind is: If some organizations are innovative and early adapters, for example, medicine, why not education?

Carlson says that the difference in the speed with which change comes depends upon the relationship between the organization and the clients that come to it in terms of who is in control. If the client is in control then he decides whether he will become involved with the organization or not. Here the organization must satisfy the client or the client will go elsewhere. Because of this, the organizations will be competitive and because they are competitive, they will be open to new ideas which will make them progressive.

On the other hand, because school attendance is State supported

because of compulsory education and because of the lack of competitors schools do not compete for clients and do not have to be sensitive to client pressures. People can't go anywhere else; they're captive clients. So schools are inhibited more because of the type of organization they are than because they are dependent upon individuals.

We all know that the educational change which is characterized by diffusion takes a lot of time, but change does take place and when it does, it does so in a strange way. Have you ever considered how this change comes to be adopted? Adoption is really quite an odd process not because it involves a psychological process of five stages, but because the stages seem to be out of logical sequence. Here's how it takes place. First of all, an individual teacher becomes aware of the existence of the change by name. He has been told by a friend, or it was communicated to him through the mass media or somebody in the staff room says he's heard about this new thing and describes it in general terms. At this stage the individual has no emotional feelings about this change whatsoever in terms of acceptance or rejection, but he has developed an interest in it and goes about getting information about the idea. After he has found out all he can, he makes an evaluation of the change. This evaluation is not an intellectual

judgment based on trial and evaluation of results, but a judgement about the desirability of the change. This is usually decided on the basis of watching the change in operation. You know what I mean, we've all visited pilot schools or innovative classrooms to browse the goodies. Anyway, it is at this state that he either buys the change or he doesn't. If he buys it he brings it home to try it out (trial) and if it is acceptable he says "I'll keep it" and he adopts the change.

Now notice the sequence of the steps. First awareness, then interest, then evaluation, trial, adoption. The individual decides he wants it - evaluation - before he tries it. This has been called the Reactive Change Model. The teacher sees the reactions of the kids in the new learning situation. If they are happier and easier to control, he things the change is effective. It is a psychological criterion for change. The teacher buys it on conviction, rather than on hard evidence produced by the change. And much of the change that takes place in education takes place in just this way.

When you consider this for a moment you can see why so many of our in-service efforts can be rather ineffective in terms of producing lasting change among teachers. In so many of these activities we go to great lengths to acquaint people with a change and we smother them with information but

they don't get a chance to see the new idea as it is put into effect by people like themselves. They need to talk to these people at length; better still to the kids involved. How about letting them live in the situation for a few weeks or so, so they can see if the new idea produces the kind of results for them that they anticipate? We should let them try it on for size. Rather than letting them evaluate on the basis of a trial, we are all too anxious to try to convince them and sell them with logical arguments. What I'm saying is that in-service should involve evaluation and trial to a much greater extent. Probably the most successful innovations are those which give teachers the most elaborate help during the evaluation and trial periods, but it's a lesson that we in education have not as yet learned fully. We still tend to measure differences by comparison. You know, bigger is better than smaller, faster is better than slower, etc.

Industry has learned this lesson. General Motors knows that when it comes up with an innovation, they'd better call in mechanics from all over the country for retraining. Business people know that in order to sell a new product well they need to pull in sales people for a week or two or retraining. The Banks know because as people climb their organizational ladders they are sent to residential schools for immersion training and heaven knows that Governments know. The Government of Canada, for example, will send an English

speaking civil servant and his whole family from Ontario to the Province of Quebec for a period of a year or even two so that he can learn French because we want a bilingual civil service. Failing this, people are periodically pulled off the job for weeks and even a month at a time for language training. I don't need to tell you that the time has long since passed for educational organizations to realize that if there is going to be change taking place, then it will have to receive this same kind of support, if not in degree at least in kind.

When we reach this point we are talking more about planned change. But, if an educational organization wants to introduce a planned change, the idea of support implies something more than just sending people off for a period of training or allowing them to spend extra monies on supplies and maybe giving them a short time for research or study. If you simply take a person out of his situation, train him for a period of time and send him back, you really won't change things too much because the social conditions of his situation remained the same in his absence. And before long they will remold the individual to what he was before. In order to effect change it is necessary to change the attitude of the social grouping as well as the attitude of the individual. Here supervisory relationships play a key role. This is very true of schools, for as the Principal goes, so goes the school.

If change must come the leaders must be sensitive to those who must do the changing. This is well illustrated in the Western Electric experiments, better known as the Hawthorne Studies. You will recall that in the relay room experiment a group of women assembled electrical relays over a five year period. During this time working conditions such as lighting, length of work period, length of rest period, etc., were constantly changed to study the effects of changing conditions on productivity. The experimenters were startled to find that even though the hours of work were cut down over the five years, as was the lighting in the room, etc., that still the productivity of the group was vastly improved. And why did this happen? Investigation showed that:

(1) A special relationship had sprung up between the workers and Supervisors.

(2) More importantly, the women were consulted about the conditions of work;

(3) And they were allowed to veto suggestions for changes in the jobs they were doing and it was determined that productivity was related to the opportunities made available to the worker to make commitments to the job and have a say in the conditions of work.

From this and other experiments conducted in the Hawthorne studies we can draw the following set of generalizations:-

(1) the productivity of an organization is dependent on social norms.

(2) non-economic rewards and sanctions affect the behaviour of workers in addition to the economic ones.

(3) in order to affect change it is necessary to alter the attitudes of the social grouping and not just the individual because workers react to changes as groups as well as individuals. So before you try to implement a planned change, you'd better know who is being effected and at what cost.

Before discussing how change has been supported in my area, I should give you some facts about my Board. The Carleton Catholic School Board serves the needs of English and French Catholic children who reside in the suburban and rural areas of Carleton County and parts of Cumberland County surrounding Ottawa, Ontario, the Nation's Capital. The Board is comprised of about 15,000 pupils, 9,000 of whom are English speaking and 6,000 of whom are French speaking. There are 20 French schools and 26 English schools. A consultative staff of 15 serves the English schools and a like number serves the French schools. There are 273 French teachers and 436 English teachers, some of which are supported

through a Federal Grant for the teaching of French to English speaking and the System is headed by a Director and 4 Superintendents.

This year's budget is in the amount of $14,709,428.00 with over 68% of the ordinary budget being spent on Instructional and Educational Services. Business administration takes about 3.4% and Plant Operations, Transportation and Debenture Charges just about account for the rest.

In the history of this Board, we have learned something from our mistakes and experiences in trying to help people effect change and the history of our Board is not a long one either because it only came into being with the amalgamation of 25 small school Boards in 1969.

In five years we have done several things such as:-

1. The development of levels system in reading, and I'll come back to this one.
2. The development of levels system in mathematics.
3. The introduction of a Kodaly based music option with the music programme.
4. The introduction of a Family Life programme.
5. The introduction of Senior Schools, i.e., 7 - 10 and 7 - 8.
6. The introduction of The Family of Schools organization.
7. The introduction of a Junior Kindergarten programme for kids four years of age by December 31st.
8. The introduction of a total immersion and partial immersion French programmes.

9. At the same time Co-ordinators and Consultants were hired to forge programmes in Kindergarten, Physical Education, Religion, Creative Arts and offer assistance to teachers.

From this litany you can immediately see where we ran somewhat afoul. With all kinds of programmes being churned out and directed at them, some teachers felt powerless to first of all learn about and then implement them. They felt in-serviced to death and, of course, became antagonistic toward the purveyers of programmes --- the Consultants and felt very insecure because they felt threatened through the inability to conform immediately. Can you see a person feeling secure and finding ego satisfaction and self-fulfillment here? Needless to say, we had not intended this. We saw all the positives in terms of offering aid. But teachers had a right to be upset, especially when an overzealous consultant or two, feeling the competition, decided to get fast results by pressing a few teachers to make changes before they were really ready to do so.

Let's go back to the reading level system mentioned earlier. Shortly after amalgamation, 5 years ago, we tried to assess the reading in the system. It was found that most of the pupils were in basal readers,

some doing language experience and most doing a combination of basal reader, language experience and phonics in the primary and in the junior and intermediate grades basal readers, augmented by various series of spellers. Comparatively speaking, the pupils were doing well enough but indications were that they could do better.

In an effort to upgrade reading in the primary, a level system was devised. This simply split the year's work into three segments or levels and provided the teacher with a booklet for each level spelling out the phonics for that level as well as an overall check list for tht three levels of each grade. The teacher was to record achievement for each pupil on a checklist, etc. It was also intended that this method would acquaint each teacher with the skills and concepts to be acquired by the pupils so that she could better serve their needs.

Two years later a reassessment showed that the junio' and intermediate reading was being conducted in much the same way as it was at amalgamation and that the levels system was not working to

expectations. In some places there was a profusion of mimeographed sheets for kids to colour-in balls or dots or draw lines to them, etc., and the classes were often broken into three static groups for reading. The pupils were sometimes locked into these groups and progressed or didn't as the group did. Sometimes parents were confused by the levels and what they meant in terms of pupil's progress. Kids were sometimes offered the marvellous opportunities of failing three times a year instead of once.

In spite of this Board-wide tests still indicated that comparatively speaking the kids were reading alright but we still weren't satisfied. About this time we became interested in Individualized reading as a means to a fuller realization of reading in all its aspects and early in 1972 the Executive Director announced to the total teaching staff at a Professional Development dinner that this was the direction we would take in the future. He gave the direction and pledged his support.

That same year we had the opportunity of sending all the Principals and at least one teacher from each school to a reading Institute

given by Don Carline at the Skyline Hotel in Ottawa. This resulted in about 10 teachers launching individualized reading programmes. In October of 1973 we were fortunate enough to be able to have Dr. Carline come to Ottawa for 2 days for our whole teaching staff. At this time he team taught with some of our staff and interacted with them in large groups, small groups and individually. This gave a tremendous impetus to individualized reading. It also represented a better use of the professional development budget because it is very much more economical to bring in your own expertise than it is to send people away to conferences where you must pay transportation, hotel fees, registration, etc. ** I should note here that the Director of Education and the Superintendents try to attend all Board-wide in-services to show support for the programmes.

In order to better support our Language Arts programme we added two more people to our consultative staff. By the way, all consultants have their own budget of about $3,500.00 each with which to support classroom programmes. The total of their monies represents

about $20.00 per pupil in the budget.

Other monies which presently support the programmes are as follows:-

(a) Each Principal receives a budget of $39.00 per pupil/year for the purchase of textbooks, library books and consumable supplies. Principals are encouraged to allow the teachers to participate in the spending of the school budget.

(b) The two Superintendents of the Board also have budgets which are used to support school programmes. In addition to this our teaching staff shares a Professional Development budget based on $2.00 per pupil which was established in last year's budget.

But money is only one form of support. In order to be in as direct contact as possible with teachers we try to do the following:-

(a) The Director of the Board visits schools by invitation to have luncheon meetings with the staffs, to ask and answer questions and generally lend support by being visible and reachable.

(b) And the Superintendents do the same thing. In addition they visit the

teachers in and out of their classrooms.

(c) Should the Superintendents evaluate teachers during the time of their trying the new programmes? No.

(d) Where budget and needs allow, we try to provide tangible assistance to demonstrate support.

(e) The Director and Superintendents meet with the Principals and Consultants once per month to keep abreast of developments.

(f) Recently a communications committee comprised of teachers of every description and geographical area of the Board was formed to meet with the director and superintendents to discuss all and any matters. Changes have been made on the recommendations of the teachers who can see from their participation that they can influence decisions that affect them. In some instances they've even had decisions changed.

(g) Two weeks ago we held a two day Organizational Development live-in with our Principals to know them better as people, clear the air and set up new structures.

(h) Another sort of monthly or bi-monthly meeting is being planned too.

This will be the "coffee cup" or the "crack-a-crock" session to which principals or family-of-schools members will be invited. No agenda will be provided for these and it is assumed that a free discussion will ensue. The first gathering of this sort went on well past 2:00 A.M. with many items being discussed, argued and resolved. Everyone who attended wants more of this sort of thing.

Not only do we want the teachers to have access to the Executive staff, we also want teachers to be able to get to know each other better because this will be better for the system. To encourage this, we are planning the establishment of a teacher centre which will be funded through the Board but operated by the teachers for themselves. The centre will stock resource and consumable materials as well as equipment, have the services of a warden to oversee it and remain open in the evenings and on Saturdays. Teachers can chat, read, make devices, watch T.V. or educational movies and have coffee.

Teachers who can't make it to the teacher centre of the Board's resource centre will be able to keep abreast of things and get support

through a travelling resource van we are planning to put into operation in September.

The members of the Board of Trustees demonstrate their support and interest for what is going on in various visible ways too. Of course, they must approve what the Director and the Superintendents do, but they also lend support through their physical presence at teacher in-services and workshops. And a very tangible demonstration of their support was seen when the Trustees allowed the schools to be closed for 12 days last year so that the teacher could use them for in-service activities. Committee of teachers decided on the activities THEY wanted.

These are the ways in which we have tried to promote change in the teaching of reading within the Carleton Catholic School Board and they seem to be paying off. To date about 60 of our teachers are involved in individualized reading programmes and many more are making progress in that direction. A direction has been set by the Executive staff but teachers are encouraged not forced to change and an assessment of what the kids in the individualized reading programmes think of reading seems to show a marked change in attitude. We think we're on the right track.